

Home Improvement Handbook

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San Francisco Planning
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Home improvement
handbook : a
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Home Improvement Handbook

A Maintenance and Remodeling Guide for San Francisco Home Owners

This handbook is published as a public service by the San Francisco Board of Public Works and Urban Community Development, in cooperation with the Planning Commission of San Francisco.

Your home is probably your greatest asset, representing your largest single investment. You can protect your investment and realize it—even increase—the value, usefulness, comfort and beauty of your home by giving it proper care.

This handbook is designed to help you. If your home needs renovating, modernizing or remodeling, it can show you how to get the job done easily, conveniently and inexpensively as possible. If your home is in good condition, it can show you what danger points to look for to avoid to keep it that way.

Use this handbook to guide you in your home improvement plans. When you remodel, share the results to your neighbors proudly. Your achievements can stimulate others, bringing new life and value to your neighborhood, and a new atmosphere of progress to the community.



Plan Your Improvements Carefully

Before you begin your improvements, inspect every part of your home from top to bottom. This should also be done if you plan to buy a used house. You probably have a good idea of what needs to be done, but you might uncover other signs of decay which could be included in your plans at little or no extra cost. Use the checklist of danger points below to be sure you haven't missed anything.

After you know what needs to be done, decide what you can do now, what must wait until later, and what is part of your long-range, ultimate goal. In this way, all phases of your work can be done as part of a "master plan."

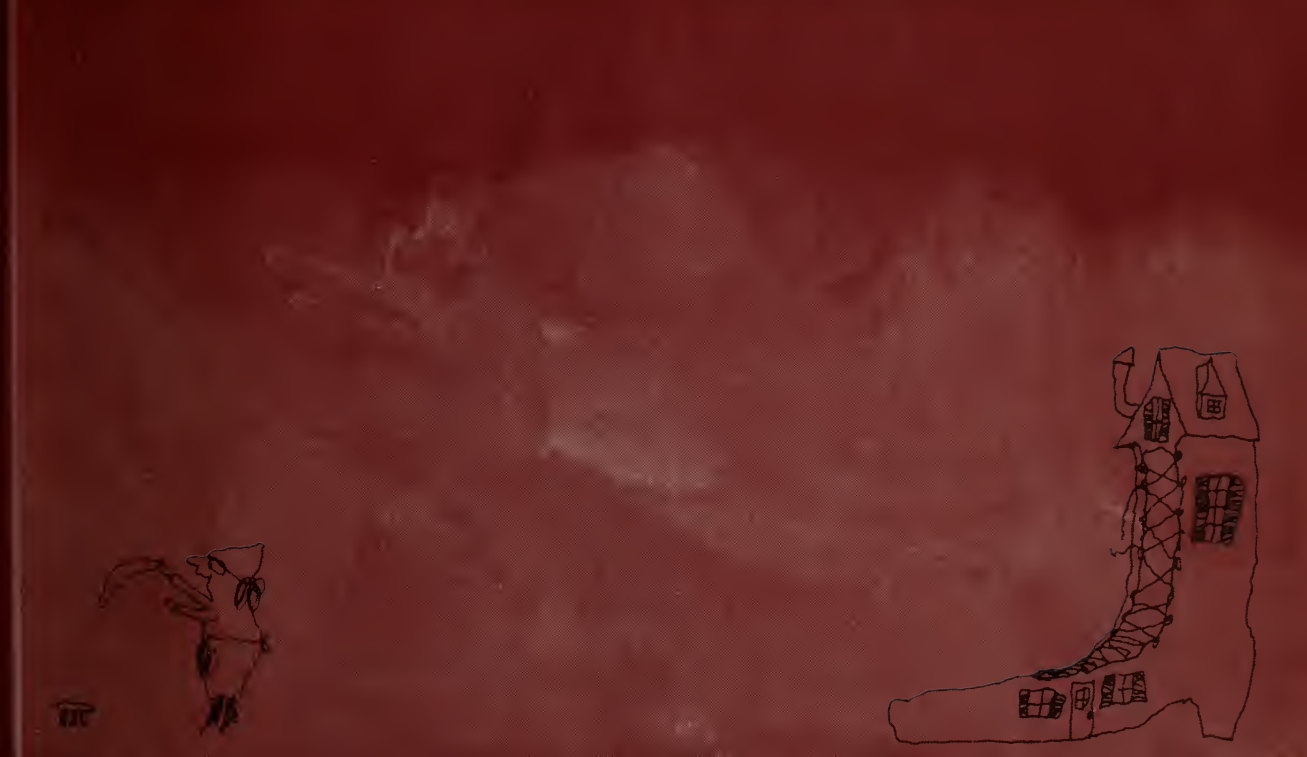
Look for These Danger Points

- **Attic:** sagging joists and rafters; stains on timbers or ceiling (indicating leaky roof).
- **Basement:** cracks, unmortared joints and leaks in walls and ceiling; sagging floor joists; basement; holes around pipes that may stop fire-stopping; sagging joists to ceiling; rot in floors.
- **Bathroom:** stained, loose walls; deteriorating tile around tub and shower; worn floor covering.
- **Chimney:** insecure cap; less than 2-in. clearance of wood around chimney; bricks in need of pointing; lack of fire-proofing where brick walls are less than 8 in. thick; lack of metal flashing to prevent leaks.
- **Doors:** sagging hinges; jambs coming loose.



defective eaves. ☐ *Downspouts*: must be cleaned (or replaced). ☐ *Saves and Gutters*: leaks; in need of cleaning or replacing; dirty; worn; leaks; or just gutter clogged. ☐ *Exterior Walls*: crumbling; staining; windows, if stained, decay; gutters; if peeling, in need of paint. ☐ *Floors*: uneven; creaks; staining. ☐ *Foundation Walls*: leaning; too much work and sills; cracks in sills; too porous; improper drainage; dry rot. ☐ *Heating*: radiators turn over; lack of automatic water control; gas leaks. ☐ *Interior Walls and Ceilings*: staining; cracks; buckling and breaking; water stains. ☐ *Kitchens*: insufficient badly painted floors; spots; walls in need of protection; missing work and stains. ☐ *Hills, Hillyard*.

washable wallpaper or waterproof paint; worn, out-of-date, inadequate equipment; worn floor covering. ☐ *Plumbing*: agent, material and materials (and lines) should be easy iron, waste line wrought iron or steel, copper supply lines, brass, copper or galvanized iron. ☐ *Porch*: sagging roof; rotting floorboards; railings or railings; decayed or loose steps; in need of paint. ☐ *Roof*: leaks; water damage. ☐ *Stairs*: cracked worn treads; wobbly nosing and railings. ☐ *Windows*: drafts or leaks (need weatherstripping). ☐ *Wiring*: old, too heavy enough for modern loads; improperly fused; worn insulation; not enough outlets (it is illegal to use extension cords over a 12' long).

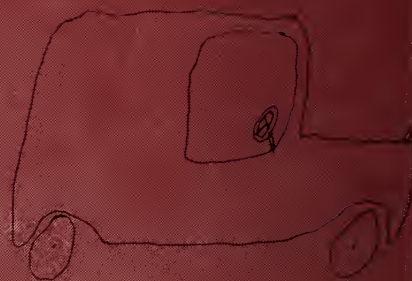


Know What the Law Requires

Codes. Your home improvements must by law conform to San Francisco's (1) building code, (2) plumbing and electrical code, (3) housing code, and (4) zoning ordinance. If you employ an architect or contractor, you can expect him to plan and execute your work in conformance with codes. But remember you are responsible for the work done. If you do the work yourself, you can get code information from the Bureau of Building Inspection. In either case, the work will be checked periodically by city inspectors to see whether codes are being met in the work done. (You can buy copies of the codes from the City Purchaser.)

Codes merely set minimum standards. You can greatly enhance the value and comfort of your home by setting your standards higher than the codes demand.

Permits. You don't need a permit for (1) painting, (2) building fences less than 6 ft. high at the rear or side of your lot, (3) re-roofing, (4) restoration of interior plaster, and (5) cabinet work, or for minor repairs of items on check list. But before making any other changes you must first get a permit, or be subject to as much as a \$1,000 fine. If you engage an architect or hire a contractor, be sure a permit has been taken out. The kind of permit you need will depend on the type of work you are planning. If it is electrical work only, you will need an electrical permit. If it is water, gas and plumbing work only, you will need a plumbing permit. If it is building work (with or without electrical or plumbing) or a combination of electrical and plumbing work, you will need a building permit. You will have to pass a brief examination before getting a permit to do your own plumbing.



or electrical work; none is required for a building permit. In some cases you must submit plans (2 request) when applying for a permit, assuring that the changes will conform to the codes. When plans are required, a plan-checking fee based on the value of the work is charged separately.

To get a building permit: (1) Fill out two copies of the application form at the Central Permit Bureau, describing the work to be done and giving the estimated cost, upon which the permit fee is based. (2) The application is then reviewed by the Bureau of Building Inspection, the zoning division of the City Planning Department, and the Fire Department. These departments may inspect your home and either clear their requirements on the application or withhold their approval. (3) Once your application is approved, the Central Permit Bureau

informs you by postcard that your permit is ready to be issued. (4) Pick up your permit at the Central Permit Bureau. (5) If there are added requirements, go to the Bureau of Building Inspection where your application will be stamped "Approved" after you have agreed to do the work required. Then get your permit from the Central Permit Bureau. When the work is finished, a "Certificate of Final Completion" is issued by an inspector.

If you plan to convert your home into apartment or hotel units (zoning permitting), the Health Department will also review your permit application and will issue a "Permit of Occupancy" when the work is completed to its satisfaction.



Get Expert Help

If you feel you can't handle your home-improvement work yourself, or simply don't want to, make arrangements with a competent architect, contractor or other specialist who can help you translate your ideas and needs into reality. Don't do it yourself unless you are sure you know how. Often an expert, through his knowledge of materials and construction shortcuts, can save you money in the long run and get the work done sooner.

The Architect can guide you and advise you through every detail of your improvement program. He studies your needs and tastes; suggests solutions; prepares drawings and specifications covering every part of the project in detail; helps you find a contractor and prepares the contract forms; and acts as your personal representative on the job at critical stages. Be

sure his taste and ideas are compatible with yours. Interview at least two or three in their offices. Ask to see some of the houses they have designed or remodeled. If you retain an architect, you can expect to depend on him for the total project. He is responsible to you for the progress and for the quality of the job, which you have worked out with him. The Northern California Chapter of The American Institute of Architects can refer you to architects who do remodeling work.

The General Contractor can carry out your job when you know exactly what you want done and how to do it, or he can work on the basis of a plan of your architect. Sometimes suggestions of obtaining financing, some who can plan the details of your project. Many general contractors specialize in home alterations. If the work is complicated and involves the structure of the



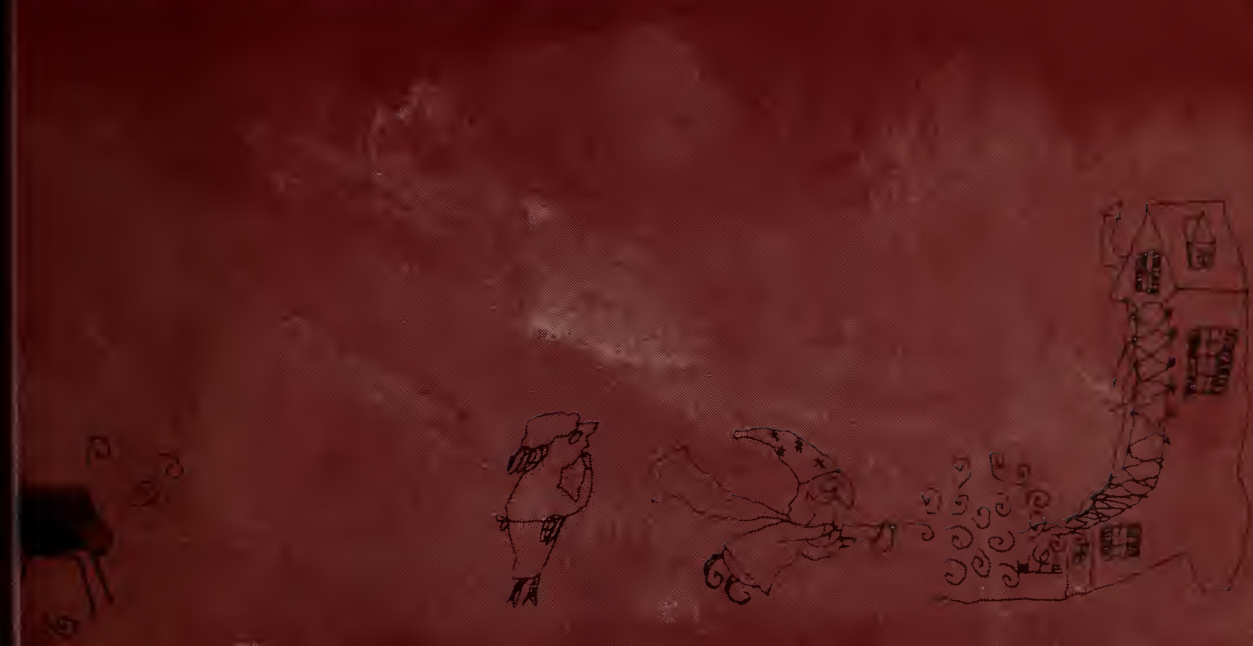
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Be Sure You Have Proper Financing

Remodeling does cost money, and if it is extensive it can be expensive. You may want to use cash from your own savings, borrow against your life insurance policy, or get a loan from your family, company credit union or other personal source. Also, there are several ways to finance your project through your bank or savings-and-loan association. Take your plans and other documents to them and let them suggest the best financing plan for you. Here are some possibilities they may suggest:

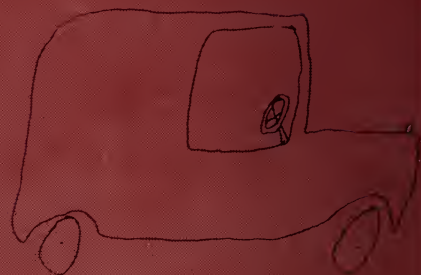
- (1) Personal loan.
- (2) Home-improvement loan based on your program.
- (3) Title One FHA-insured home-improvement loan based on your plans (maximum amount \$3500; maximum repayment time five years).

(4) Special FHA-insured financing if you live in an official urban renewal area under the city's program, or if you have received a notice to correct deficiencies in your property. This financing would provide better terms, a longer mortgage period, and lower interest rate. (You can also get information about this program from a building inspector or SPUR.)

(5) Commitment on a new or increased loan as a first mortgage.

(6) Loan based on reappraisal of your property after the work has been done using money borrowed from another source. This allows you to pay off the original loan and have a lower monthly payment.

Finally, if you have not been able to obtain a loan through normal sources, call on the local representative of the Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program. He may be able to suggest a solution.



Understand the Terms of Your Contract

Plans, notes and specifications are drawn up and before you sign a contract for any other document for any of the improvement work to be done a last minute copy of "bid" should be obtained from enclosed contractors. If you have chosen an architect, he will make such arrangements. Contractor's estimates should also be obtained and after studying the plans and specifications, three bids are usually sufficient, and you choose whichever one you prefer. At no time, before awarding the contract should the owner, instead of one contractor, be made known to others bidding on the job.

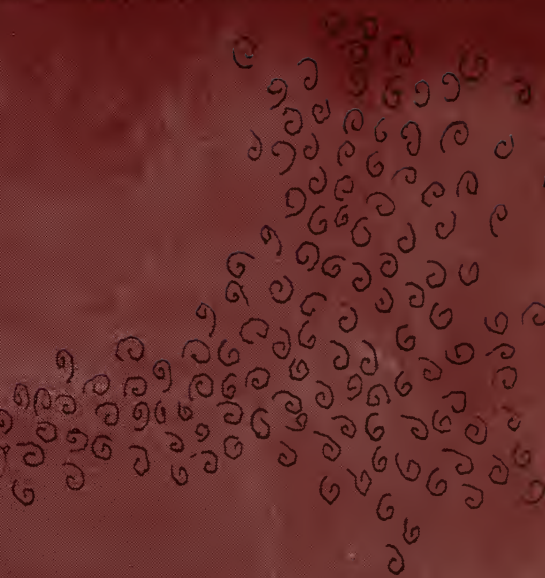
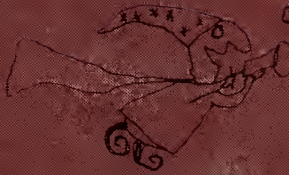
Read the contract carefully. Do not sign it until you are sure of the contractor's reliability. If the work is satisfactory, you may want to continue performance bonds. The contract should include the starting and completion dates. If any part of the proposed contract is not clear, con-

sult a lawyer, your bank or some other responsible money-lending institution.

A word of caution: word-of-mouth arrangements may lead to possible misunderstandings. For sure all agreements are written into the contract and that the plans and specifications are complete. If changes are made after the contract is signed, be sure they are written into the contract and initialed by you, the contractor and, if you have one, the architect. Changes made after the contract is signed may not be covered by the original contract price. Be sure you know exactly how much extra such change is going to cost, and pay it immediately.

You can expect that answers and proper business procedures from a reliable contractor. Do not expect some answers or arrangements that you "couldn't worry about it."

Payment: The payment method should be set forth specifically in your construction contract.



Whether you have engaged an architect, hired a general contractor or are yourself coordinating the work of several subcontractors, you should have a clear understanding of the method of making payments. The American Institute of Architects, Associated General Contractors, Associated Home Builders and various subcontractor associations listed in the directory can give you information about accepted methods of making payments.

Do not make the final payment to the contractor until (1) the finished work has been completed according to the plans and specifications and has been inspected by all the required local inspectors, and (2) until 60 days after you have recorded a "Notice of Completion" in the Recorder's office. By then the lien period will have expired, protecting you from liability in case the general contractor has not paid his subcontractors and material suppliers.

Directory/Government Agencies

Bureau of Wedding Inspection, Room 270, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 211.

General Permit Bureau, Room 200, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 207.

Revenue Transition Division, Room 270, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 261.

Fire Department, Room 2, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, Room 2.
Health Department, 101 Court Street, Second Floor—Hennepin 2-4701.

Planning Department/Planning Division, 100 Lake Street—Hennepin 2-2121, room 877.

Planning Transition Division, Room 254, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 251.

Permits, Room 275, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 260.

Police, Room 167, City Hall—Hennepin 2-2121, room 164.

Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program, Room 100, 150 New Montgomery Street—Hennepin 2-2289, room 210.



Deceased / Announcements

Funeral.—The American Friends of Abraham Lincoln Memorial Fund, 17 Thacker Street, San Francisco 4, California, will

conduct services.—Abraham Lincoln at San Francisco National Park, San Francisco, Friday, 100 Avenue of the Americas, University of California, Berkeley.—Times 10-11 a.m., 1967.

Funeral.—Funeral of Benjamin J. Gough of Northridge, California, 407 Sunset Street, San Francisco 4, California, will

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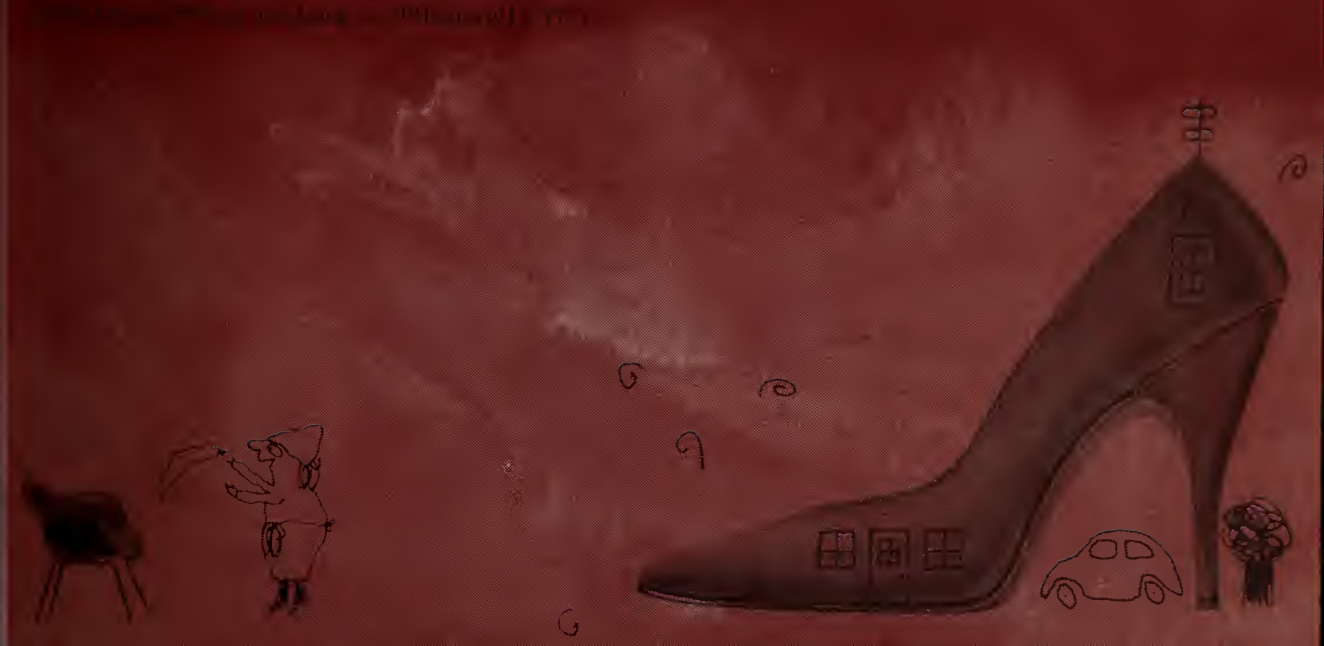
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This handbook was prepared through voluntary efforts under joint sponsorship of the City and County of San Francisco and SPUR, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association.

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Copies of this Handbook can be obtained from SPUR,
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